



# **SYHA Customer Scrutiny Panel Report.**

Understanding Customer Awareness of  
Energy Efficiency Improvements.

# Scrutiny Panel Project – Understanding Customer Awareness of Energy Efficiency Improvements (EEI)

## Executive Summary:

- Many customers are struggling with rising energy costs, so understanding and supporting EEI is important.
- Customers want simple, clear information about costs, timelines, disruption and how improvements work.
- Customers believe the main reasons for agreeing to EEI are saving money, staying warm, and feeling more comfortable.
- Customers prefer updates by letter or email, with face-to-face support offered where needed, and they value communication that is friendly, clear and easy to understand.
- Customers need clearer explanations, simple visual aids and real examples to feel confident about the improvements.

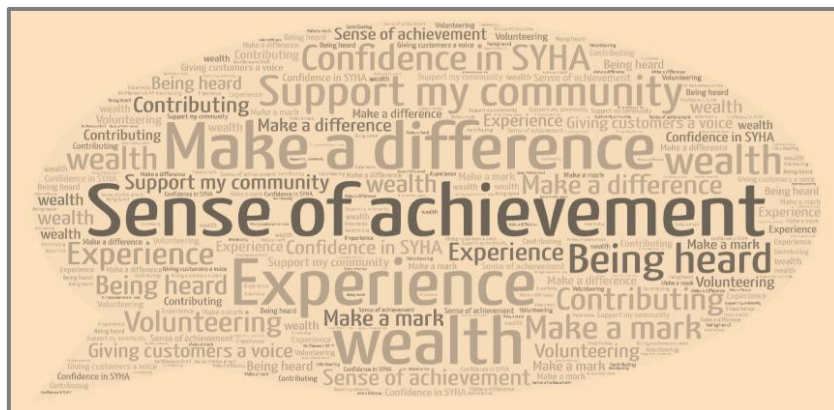
## Introduction:

### Who we are

We are a group of customers from different areas of SYHA. Some of us are customers, some of us have been on the Good Work programme. We've got various life experiences, and this brings different perspectives to the scrutiny panel. We are a diverse group who vary in age, are different genders, have different religions and are from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. We live across all areas of South Yorkshire.

As a group, we've been running for over 4 years, but some members have considerable experience of scrutiny in its different forms at SYHA for over 12 years.

### Why we are involved in Scrutiny...



## Why Did We Choose to Look at Energy Efficiency Improvements in Homes?

We chose EEI in homes as an exercise because energy bills have increased, people are struggling financially and may even choose not to heat their homes and it's important they have good awareness of how energy efficiency can help reduce their costs

We were informed that SYHA is committed to improving the energy efficiency of all its homes, with a target to bring every home up to EPC Band C by 2030. To achieve this, they will be carrying out EEI to all those homes that fall below this standard in the next five years.

We are keen to help improve the experience for customers whose homes may be eligible for EEI's. To do this, we need to understand what SYHA customers already know about energy efficiency measures, as well as any concerns or barriers that might prevent them from agreeing to have work done.

We wanted to make sure customers could easily share their views, especially when changes like EEI are being planned. This also links to the **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, one of the Consumer Standards** which is about making sure customers are kept informed and have a say in decisions that affect them.

By doing this, we felt it was a helpful way to check how well SYHA is listening to customers and making sure their voices shape what happens next.

## What were the aims/objectives of the exercise?

We were keen to ensure customers' needs were being met throughout the EEI and that SYHA were being clear and transparent in their communication. We wanted customers to:

- be well informed about the types of EEI
- feel confident in agreeing to the improvements in their home
- have confidence in the contractors carrying out the improvements
- be aware of the advantages of the improvements and were confident in how to use them.

We discussed everything we had researched and used this to form our key question: **How aware are customers of energy efficiency improvements, and would they be willing to agree to them?**

The outcome we wanted to achieve was **to support customers in understanding what energy efficiency improvements involve and the benefits they can bring.**

## Methodology:

To understand what SYHA's current EEI offer was we met with Anokhee Parikh, Programme Lead for Sustainability. Anokhee shared a presentation covering SYHA's current activities and future plans.

We wanted to find out what customers know about energy efficiency and any concerns they might have. To do this, we asked Viewpoint to carry out a survey. We chose to survey:

- **Customers who might be eligible for improvements in the future:** They may be experiencing cold homes or higher energy bills, which may make them more aware of energy efficiency.
- **Randomly selected general needs customers:** To make sure we hear a mix of views
- **Customers from ethnic minority backgrounds:** To make sure we were hearing from people with different cultural experiences and ensure the work was inclusive.
- **Involved customers:** These customers regularly give feedback and can offer more detailed thoughts.

We wanted to make the survey as inclusive as possible by ensuring that everyone had the opportunity to participate. To achieve this, we:

- Offered multiple ways to complete the survey (e.g., online, paper copies, and telephone options).
- Promoted the survey across different channels to reach a diverse audience
- Gave the option to have the survey in a language other than English

We used additional scrutiny methods so we could strengthen the exercise:

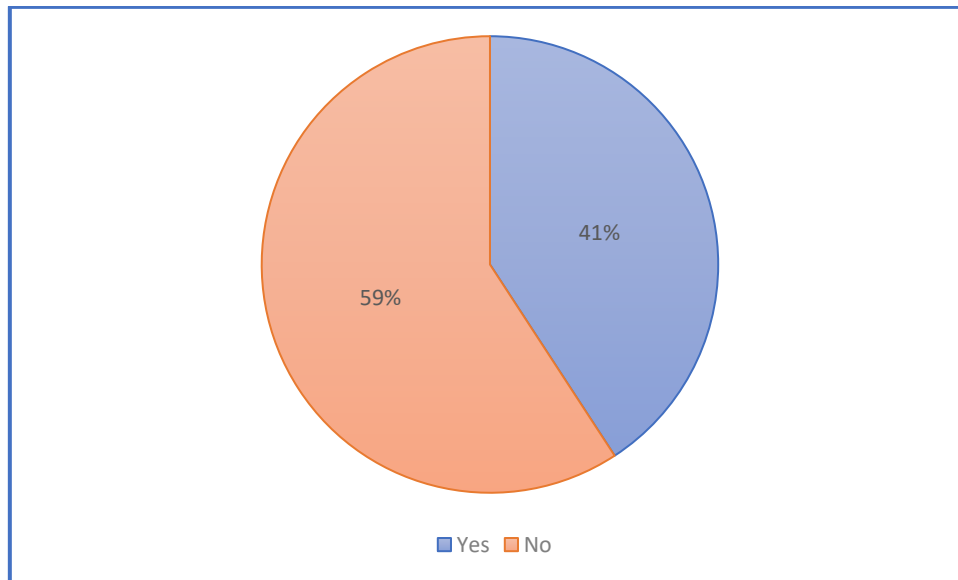
- **Focus group** - asked a group of involved customers to compare different styles of customer letters to understand which tone and format were more 'customer friendly.'
- **A benchmarking exercise** - reviewing other Housing Associations' webpages about EEI to identify best practice.
- **Contractor interviews** - to ensure their values and work ethics align with SYHA's standards

## Findings:

We attempted to survey a total of **400** customers, completing a total of **122** responses from our survey, resulting in a **31%** response rate.

## Survey Questions

### Do you think your home is energy efficient?



More than half of the customers we surveyed told us they don't feel their homes are energy efficient. We aren't sure whether this reflects how the homes are performing or whether some customers find energy efficiency difficult to understand, as we missed an opportunity to ask a follow-up question.

### Requests for Clear, Practical Advice

Some customers used the comment questions to ask for straightforward support. One customer said they would like:

**“Some helpful leaflets or tips sent to customers to understand low-cost, no-hassle energy-saving ideas.”**

Others mentioned features that make their home feel less warm, such as:

- Older windows
- Draughts
- Rooms without radiators

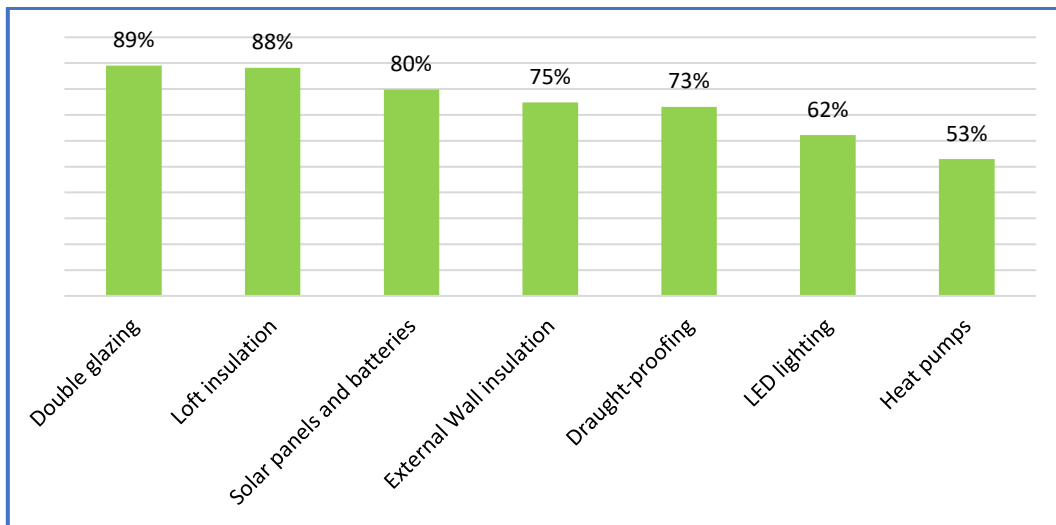
Some people may assume older homes are automatically less efficient. Others may judge efficiency by how often they turn their heating on—especially if they are trying to keep costs down.

**We think it would help customers if SYHA :**

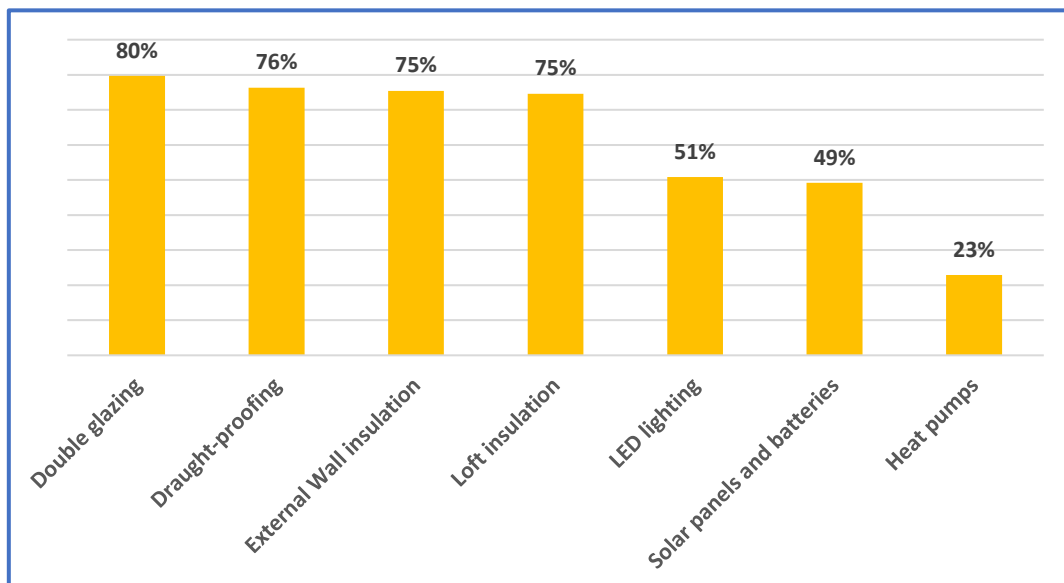
- Clarify what energy efficiency really means
- Tackle common myths and misunderstandings
- Provide practical, real examples of how people can improve their energy efficiency

We wanted to check **what customers understood about the different types of improvements SYHA offer** and asked the following 3 questions to help with this.

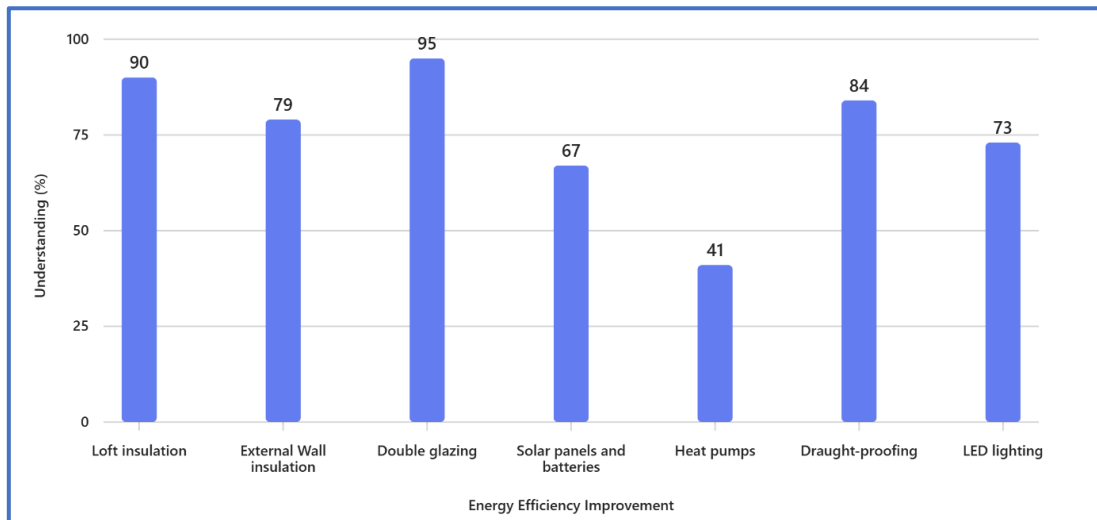
**Which of the following energy efficiency improvements have you heard of?**



**And which of them do you think are most beneficial?**



## How much understanding do you have of how each of these improvements work?



Heat pumps scored the lowest across all areas. This may reflect early negative publicity, limited customer understanding, and uncertainty about how the systems work.

While 89% of customers have heard of solar panels and home batteries, only 49% believe they are beneficial. Understanding appears to be low, and the gap between awareness and perceived value may be linked to outdated information, cost concerns, or negative stories people have heard in the past.

### Customer Questions and Uncertainty

Some customers expressed doubts about how solar panels would benefit them personally. One person said:

**“I would like information on solar panels, what the cost would be to me, if the majority of the electric would go back to the grid, meaning I would get no benefit.”**

Others showed interest and curiosity, with customers saying things like:

**“I am interested in knowing about solar panels.”**

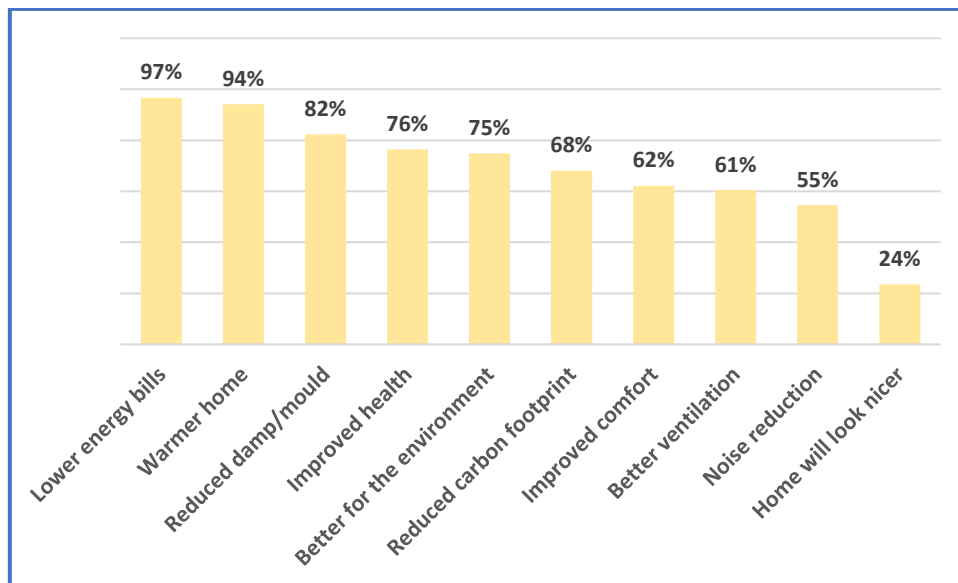
**“Solar would be good.”**

Clear, up-to-date information explaining how **solar panels and batteries** and **heat pumps** work today, their improved efficiency, and the potential cost savings would be beneficial. We feel that using visual aids, such as videos, infographics, and real examples from customers who have already made the improvements and seen their bills go down, would help build confidence and make the information easier to understand.

**LED lighting** also scored quite lowly across all areas and the benefits of this should be clearly explained.

We wanted to understand which benefits matter most to customers, so we can use the right messages when encouraging people to agree to EEI. To do this, we asked the following question.

**In which of the following ways do you think energy efficiency improvements benefit homes?**



Customers told us that **saving money** and **staying warm and comfortable** are their top priorities when thinking about home improvements and energy efficiency.

Some people want clear, practical information based on real examples of what already works well. One customer said:

**“Completely fully informed with insight into ‘already installed’ exemplary setups which improve efficiency etc, especially around cost of living which is a top list priority as customers in social housing.”**

**Financial Impact Is the Key Concern**

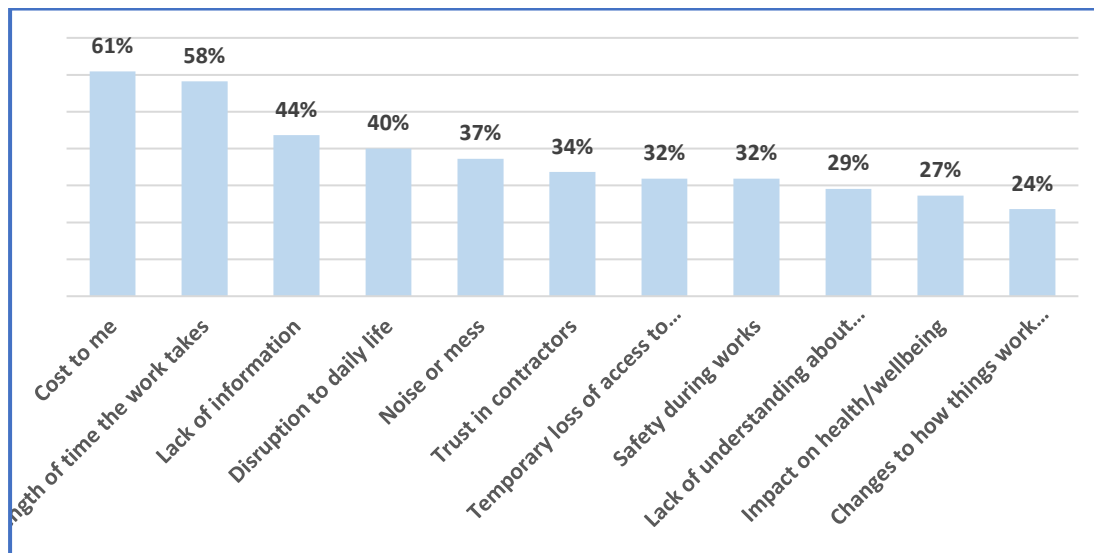
For many customers, the financial impact remains the most important factor. As one person put it:

**“At the end of the day it’s all about money.”**

We think making financial savings and improved comfort should be the main messages when talking about energy efficiency. Customers also care about the health and environmental benefits, so it’s important to explain these clearly as well

We wanted to understand what might put people off agreeing to EEI in their homes, so we asked customers the following question:

**What concerns would you have about having energy efficiency improvements done in your home?**



Cost was the biggest concern for customers and the main reason they may hesitate to agree to the improvements.

Some customers were worried that the work could lead to higher rent. One person said:

**“I would like to have stuff in writing, if having this work done, would increase the rent.”**

Others weren’t sure whether they would be asked to contribute financially at all, and wanted clarity on whether any costs might fall to them.

**Reassurance About Long-Term Savings**

A few customers also wanted to understand whether the improvements would genuinely save them money over time. One customer explained:

**“Quality Information on work to be done? What it involves? How long it will disrupt my life? And any cost to me? Also will it save me money in the long run.”**

To help ease customer concerns, communications about cost should be very clear and cover the following points:

- Whether there is any direct cost to them and that their rent won’t increase.
- How government funding supports the work
- How the improvements can save them money

### **Concerns About the Duration of the Work**

Over half of customers (58%) are worried about how long the improvement works will take. Some specifically asking for full details well in advance, including what work will be carried out and clear start and end dates. One customer explained:

**“I would need all the information beforehand as to what improvements will be done & roughly how long they would take.”**

Another said:

**“To be told estimated length of time. Plenty of notice beforehand and how long would it take.”**

Customers may be anxious about needing time off work, potential disruptions if they work from home, and periods without power. To address these concerns, we think that SYHA and contractors should communicate clearly from the outset, provide transparent timelines, and keep customers informed about any delays.

Lack of information was the third-highest concern, raised by 44% of customers. In addition, 29% said they were worried because they don't fully understand how the improvements work. Customers shared comments such as:

**“I would like more information about it all, so there is enough to convince me about the work and what the pros and cons are.”** And **“Having full information about what is being carried out and what materials are being used.”**

Customers need clear guidance on where to access information about the improvements, ideally in both digital and non-digital formats. Providing written materials during the initial meeting with the contractor would ensure everyone has access without relying on online resources. Creating straightforward guides that explain each improvement, expected timelines, and the benefits, would help customers feel informed and reassured.

### **Concerns About Disruption**

Around 40% of customers are also concerned about disruption to their daily routines. They want clear information about which rooms will be affected and practical guidance to help minimise inconvenience. One person told us:

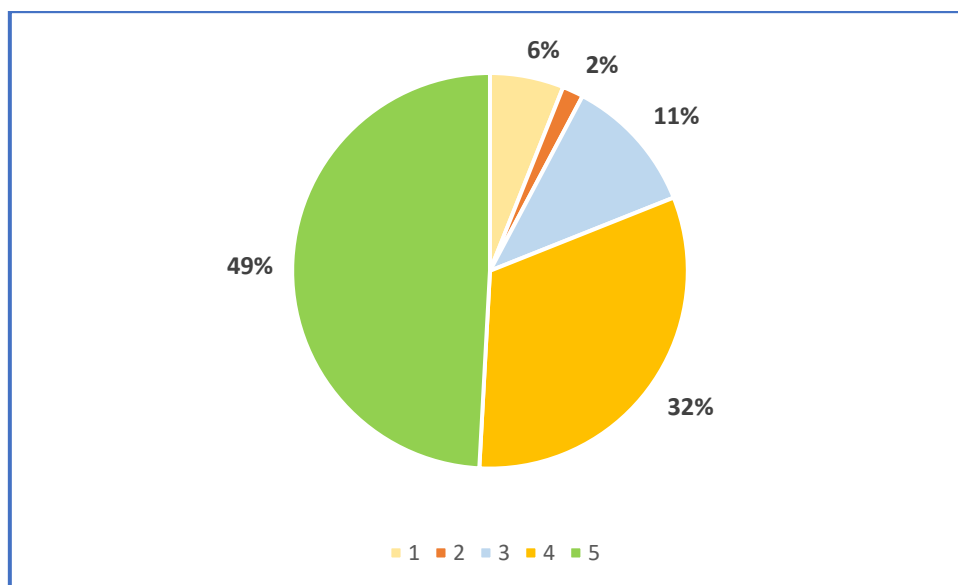
**“I would like to be told what was going on and especially what is going to be done. Also how it would affect my daily life.”**

Another customer added:

**“I think you’ve always been good at letting us know what improvements like this involve. But things I appreciate are knowing how long the work will take, and being informed how the work will disrupt our home, which rooms etc affected.”**

Providing simple tips, room-by-room guidance, and an FAQ section would help reassure customers and set clear expectations.

**How confident would you feel about agreeing to energy efficiency improvements in your home? (1-5, 1 no confidence at all – 5 fully confident)**



We were pleased that most customers scored 4 or 5 and said they would feel confident about agreeing to the EEI. When asked what would help them feel even more confident, customers consistently said they wanted clear, straightforward information presented in simple terms. One customer explained:

**“Lots of prior information and explanation in simple terms, including how I will benefit and the impact on the environment and climate.”**

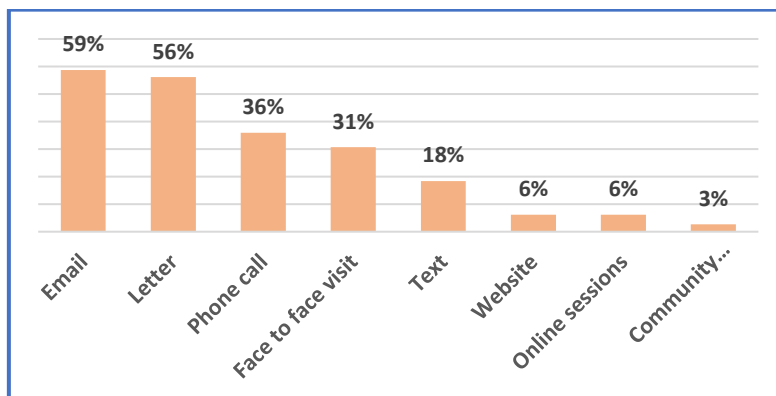
Customers also requested practical guidance on what to do once the improvements are installed, such as:

**“I would like to be informed how to use the improvements.”**

Transparency, communication and reassurance also emerged as key themes. Customers emphasised wanting to trust the process and the people involved. For

example: **“I would like reassurance about how long this work would take and that I could trust everyone involved in this work.”** And **“I would like meetings where SYHA are open and transparent about the whole process.”**

**How would you like us to talk to you about energy efficiency improvements?**



We recommend prioritising **letters and emails** as the main ways of keeping customers informed. However, it’s important to agree communication preferences early in the process so customers receive information in the way that works best for them.

### **Supporting Customers Who Need Additional Help**

For customers who may need extra support, **face-to-face visits** should be considered, along with giving them the option to involve someone they trust. This reflects what some customers told us about needing help to understand or manage the information. One person explained:

**“I am his sister. I would need to organise this for my brother and sister-in-law, as he has a speech impediment and his wife does not speak much English. I would need all the information so I can explain it to them.”**

Another customer told us they would need the information in their own language. These examples highlight how important it is to allow customers to involve a family member or advocate where this helps them feel more confident.

### **Using Group or Community Meetings When Appropriate**

Although initial interest in online or community meetings was low, we think this option should be revisited once work begins in a specific area. At that point, customers may have similar questions or concerns that could be addressed together.

### **Providing Clear Information About Homes**

When we asked, “*Would you like to know anything else about the energy efficiency of your home and how to improve it?*” customers said they wanted clearer and more personalised information. They asked:

**“How do I find out what the energy rating is for our home?”**

and said:

**“I think all homes should come with a breakdown of the energy efficiency and what specifically has been done on the home to achieve this.”**

We believe this level of information should be available to all customers—whether or not their home is currently eligible for improvements—alongside simple guidance on what they can do themselves.

Some customers told us that their personal circumstances might affect their ability to take part in the work. One person said:

**“My health is not good at the moment and I don't think I would want any work doing to my home at this time.”**

Another explained they would need:

**“A schedule of work and a disability-friendly point of contact.”**

These comments remind us that customers’ needs vary and that **flexibility is essential** throughout the process.

Overall, it’s important to recognise that customers have a wide range of needs — including people with disabilities, those who speak other languages, customers with medical conditions, and individuals who live alone and may require additional support or reassurance. Ensuring that communication and information reflect these needs will help customers feel included, safe and supported throughout the process.

### **Letter comparison Task**

We were shown examples of the letters that could be sent to customers at different stages of the improvement work, such as the first letter SYHA sends when arranging a survey for homes that might be eligible. We thought it was important to compare different styles of letters as we wanted customers to have clear information, to notice the letter and feel reassured as often works can be

daunting. We wanted the letters to feel friendly, and we also wanted to make sure the chosen letter became the template for all letters sent throughout the work.

We asked a group of involved customers the following:

- Which letter they preferred and why
- Whether they would take action if their chosen letter arrived by post
- If they would make any changes to their chosen letter and should it be adapted
- Whether there was anything else we should consider

The majority of customers told us they preferred letter B



### What they thought worked well about Letter B

- Photograph and contact information about the liaison officer
- Use of a flowchart/diagram **“including the steps diagram is helpful for clients who like a visual representation of the process.”**
- Information about next steps
- Clearly stated telephone number **“Also there was the caller’s phone number on the letter so I could programme into my phone - making it easier to recognise who is phoning and I will be more likely to answer the call.”**
- The tone of the letter

### Considerations for improvements

- Make it clear there isn’t a cost involved
- Offer support for vulnerable customers
- Ensure accessibility is considered

We agree with the involved customers feedback and recommend **Letter B should be used as a basis for all styles of communications.** Letter B was a more engaging friendlier letter that customers would notice and find easy to understand, especially with the additions of photos and infographics.

## Meeting with the Contractor – Seddon Construction Ltd

Although contractors had already been chosen to deliver the EEI, we felt it was important to understand how the selection process worked and why these contractors were chosen. We also wanted to meet them directly, and through this we found:

- They were chosen as the main contractor through a regional procurement framework where all contractors were pre-vetted.
- Five contractors were assessed, and Seddon was chosen due to their strong alignment with SYHA's values, experience, and trustworthy approach.
- Seddon previously worked with National Energy Action to resolve issues from an insulation programme, demonstrating strong capability and ethos.
- Seddon is a long-established, family-run business with extensive experience in the housing sector.
- All staff are directly employed, supporting consistent quality and continuity.
- The same staff team remains on each project from start to finish, helping maintain clear communication with customers.
- The company is financially stable and prioritises paying suppliers promptly.
- They invest heavily in planning to avoid delays and aim to give realistic, achievable timelines.

We were told that one of the main challenges in similar projects has been loft insulation, especially when lofts need to be cleared. To make this easier for customers, offering support such as skips, charity donation options and help with clearing items could make a real difference, particularly as we know people can feel emotionally attached to their belongings.

We felt reassured by our meeting with Seddon, however we do think it's important to **keep monitoring customer feedback so any dissatisfaction can be picked up quickly**. Finally, we feel customers should have been involved in choosing the contractor, and that customer involvement should be an important part of any future decisions about contractors.

## Website Comparison Exercise

SYHA doesn't currently have a dedicated EEI webpage, although some information about being environmentally friendly and saving energy already exists on the website.

Even though only a small number of customers said they prefer to receive energy efficiency information online, we still believe a dedicated webpage is important. It gives a single place to find information and makes it more accessible through

translation tools and other built-in accessibility features. We've already worked on improving the website's layout and language in previous scrutiny exercises and based on recommendations from that exercise SYHA are continuing to raise awareness so more customers know how to access and use it.

To make the webpage as helpful as possible, we reviewed retrofit and energy-efficiency webpages from:

- **Yorkshire Housing**
- **Sanctuary Housing**
- **Southern Housing**

Comparing their content with our customer feedback helped us identify:

- What information is essential
- What should be included
- What can be left out
- What customers genuinely want and need

Bringing together the best practice from other webpages with the insights from our survey gives us a clear understanding of what matters most and what will help customers feel more confident about EEI.

Our survey findings show that customers want:

- Clear explanations of **what retrofit is** and **why it's happening**
- Details about the **improvements being installed**
- A simple **step-by-step guide** to the process
- Information about **how long the work will take** (58% concerned)
- Clarity on **how disruptive the work will be** (40% concerned)
- **Examples of past work** to help visualise the process
- Explanations of **funding sources**, to address cost concerns
- Reassurance about **contractor standards**, as trust was a concern for 34%

Visual aids, FAQs and downloadable resources would also make the webpage more user-friendly and easier to understand.

## **Recommendations:**

### **1. Help customers understand energy efficiency**

- Explain EEI using simple, clear language.
- Provide up to date information with real customer examples.
- Offer information in a range of formats (website, leaflets, short guides, videos).

### **2. Focus on what matters most to customers**

- Make saving money and having a warmer, more comfortable home the main messages. Include health and environmental benefits as supporting messages

### **3. Be open and honest about costs**

- Explain how the work is funded and confirm that the work is free to customers.
- Offer reassurance that rent won't increase because of improvements.
- Share examples of cost savings

### **4. Give clear timelines and explain what to expect**

- Let customers know what work will be done, how long it will take and which rooms will be affected.
- Give realistic timelines early and explain any delays as soon as possible.
- Keep customers updated throughout the process.

### **5. Use communication methods customers prefer**

- Use letters and emails as the main way of keeping customers informed.
- Check communication preferences early.
- Offer face-to-face support for people who need extra help.
- Encourage customers to involve a trusted person if it helps.
- Make sure accessible versions (large print, translations) are always available.

### **6. Use letter B as a template for written communication**

- Keep the tone warm, supportive and easy to understand.
- Break information into simple steps and highlight what happens next.
- Use photos, diagrams and clear contact details to help customers feel confident.

### **7. Make information visual and easy to understand**

- Use videos, infographics and photos to explain more technical improvements like heat pumps and solar panels.
- Provide simple printable guides for customers who prefer paper.
- Share case studies and real examples from other customers.

### **8. Create a clear and helpful EEI webpage**

Include:

- What the improvements are
- What to expect during the work
- Benefits (savings, comfort, health)
- Funding information
- Case studies and visual aids
- Contractor information
- Information about eligibility

**The webpage should support (not replace) direct communication.**

### **9. Support customers throughout the contractor work**

- Explain what customers can expect from contractors and how they will behave in the home.
- Keep the same staff involved wherever possible to build trust.
- Offer help with challenges like clearing loft spaces.
- Regularly check feedback during the works.

### **10. Monitor whether community support is needed once work starts in an area**

- Consider using optional drop-ins, group Q&As or short “what to expect” sessions.

### **11. Make sure communication is inclusive**

- Offer translated versions, large print and face-to-face options.
- Allow family members or advocates to support customers if needed.
- Recognise individual needs (e.g. health issues, disabilities, anxiety) and adapt communication accordingly.

## **Monitoring:**

### **How does the scrutiny panel want to follow this up?**

- Monitor the action plan
- Monitor any signs of dissatisfaction by checking for any complaints relating the EEI program.
- Gather feedback from customers who have had the improvements

### **How do you want to communicate changes to customers?**

- SYHA website and social media
- promote as a news story on the website to tell customers we have made improvements and that we listen
- SYHA newsletter

### **Is there anything you’ve learned from this process that you will use for future scrutiny projects?**

- Involved customers continue to be a strong asset in scrutiny work.
- Building early relationships with relevant service leads helps the scrutiny process run more smoothly.
- Using a mix of scrutiny methods strengthens the exercise. However, it's important to remain mindful of scope.
- Careful survey design prevents missed opportunities. Survey questions should be reviewed thoroughly before launch.

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**SYHA Customer Scrutiny Panel January 2026**

**Appendices**

**EI Viewpoint Survey Results.xlsx**

**Letter comparison task results.docx**

**Task Letter A.docx**

**Task Letter B.docx**

**EI website comparison table.docx**